

Conversation about American Agriculture's Future: Larkin Martin

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

A graduate of Vanderbilt University, Larkin Martin is managing partner of a family farming operation in northern Alabama, Martin Farm. The farm's principal crops are corn, wheat, soybeans, and cotton. In recent years they have also raised canola, sesame, peanuts and sorghum. The operation covers around 7,000 acres of owned and rented land. She's also Vice President of The Albemarle Corporation, another family business, and both positions she's held since 1990.

Beyond the farming operation, Martin's business resume in agriculture is nothing less than impressive. Larkin is a past Chairman of The Cotton Board and the Farm Foundation and a current Farm Foundation Trustee. On the board of several other companies, she previously was Chairman for the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Associate at Arthur Andersen LLP and is currently a Director of Rayonier Inc., (RYN), a timberland REIT headquartered in Jacksonville, Florida.

Wait, there's more. Martin is also a member of the board of directors of the Public Research Affairs Council of Alabama and Africa Harvest, a Kenyan-based NGO helping to improve the lives of smallholder farmers and rural communities across Africa and the Soil Health Institute in Cary, North Carolina. She has served on the Alabama Ethics Commission and on the boards of The Alabama Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, The Vanderbilt Alumni Association, Camp Merrie-Woode and Leadership Alabama. She currently serves on the Agriculture Advisory Council of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

Martin was named an Eisenhower Fellow in 2012.

Because of the tradition of Martin Farm over the generations to continually improve, Martin has been on the forefront of using RTK guidance on their equipment, GPS mapping and precision technologies for soil sampling, prescription fertilizer applications and business recordkeeping.

While my brother, Brent Murphree, has known her for some time, I recently discovered her business insights and acumen listening to her on a panel during the recent 2021 Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City Agricultural Symposium.

People who know her will tell you she is the daughter who tagged along with her dad, the late Sykes Martin, going everywhere with him infusing in her a sense of what it takes to run a family business and perhaps what produced a recognition in the industry as one of the most recent innovative young cotton producers, in addition to understanding the grand scheme of things when it comes to American agriculture. So, too me, it made sense to interview her for our ongoing "conversation series."



Simply put, Larkin Martin is passionate about agriculture mostly because she likes to grow things. Reading her profile and assessing her answers to my questions, you'll also conclude she likes to grow relationships, technology use and business management advances. (Photo courtesy of The Cotton Board.)

Arizona Agriculture: Tell us about your farm?

Martin: Our farm has been in continuous operation through multiple generations. I am the 7th. Over the generations it has changed with the times. Today we are a row crop operation, raising primarily corn, cotton, soybeans, and wheat but we will try other crops.

Recently that list has included canola, peanuts, sorghum, and sesame. Martin Farm farms land we own and then we rent additional land on both cash and share leases.

Arizona Agriculture: What inspired you to get into farming and share a bit about your family's farming history in Alabama?

Martin: I got into farming by generational chance. I am the oldest of four daughters. My father was diagnosed with cancer in 1990 when he was in his 50s and I was in my 20s, working in Washington, DC.

I moved home to help while he underwent treatment and have been here ever since. My father's family has roots in our community dating back to the early 1800s and some of the land we farm has been in continuous crops since that time.

Arizona Agriculture: Regarding your company, what have you brought to the farming operation that's different from past generations, specifically as it relates to management and the whole scope of your day-to-day?

Martin: I think the biggest changes that have occurred during my tenure have been brought by the technology that has become available over that last 30 years and our ability to adopt the ones that best fit on our farm.

When I began managing the farm in 1990, land lines were the only kind of phone and fax machines were modern. We had a desktop computer, which was still a little unusual in a farm office and I used measuring wheels in the fields and a planimeter on large maps to measure acres. Saving seed and moldboard plowing every year was the norm. Revolutions in digitization, communication, automation, genetics, telematics, soil health awareness and more have all happened since then and dramatically changed how we farm and the cost structures for raising the same crops.

Arizona Agriculture: Farming in Alabama is quite different than in Arizona, obviously. Highlight the biggest difference but talk about the commonalities?

Martin: The biggest difference is climate and availability/necessity of irrigation; we average 55-60 inches of rain a year, but it does not come when we order it. Less than

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It's Here: Tier One Shortage Declared on the Colorado River

By Chelsea McGuire, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Director

The day we wished would never come has arrived: on August 16, the Bureau of Reclamation declared that Lake Mead will be in a Tier One shortage level beginning 2022. With the elevation of the lake below 1,075 feet, Arizona will now be subject to significant cuts in water deliveries from the Colorado River.

Pinal County agriculture relies on an almost equal mix of groundwater and surface water. The surface water comes from the "excess pool," delivered through the Central Arizona Project (CAP) canal. The excess pool is made up of water that's not already under contract with higher priority CAP users – in other words, it's the lowest priority water source on the CAP. Under the terms of the 2019 Drought Contingency Plan, a Tier One shortage triggers a 512,000-acre-foot reduction in Arizona's Colorado River deliveries. Accordingly, the entire excess pool will be eliminated, and Central Arizona agriculture will no longer have access to surface water from the Colorado River.

While this news came as a surprise to no one, it still brings with it dire consequences for farmers in the Central Arizona valley. According to a 2008 study by the University of Arizona, a 300,000-acre-foot reduction in water deliveries will lead to a decrease of \$63 to \$66 million in farm sales alone. And that doesn't account for the decrease in input or equipment sales, or any of the other multiplier effects that make agriculture the economic engine of Pinal County.

Mitigating the Impact

To mitigate the impacts of this severe water cut, several higher priority water users have agreed to forgo some of their CAP deliveries and allow that water to flow down to farms in Pinal County. This will account for about 105,000 acre-feet, but that mitigation will only last for one year.

The longer-term solution is for farms to return to a higher reliance on groundwater. To facilitate that, the irrigation districts in the county are embarking on a project to increase groundwater pumping capacity. And this project is no small feat: the estimated cost is upwards of \$50 million, and the rate payers in the dis-

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Toasting 100 Years with Centennial Red and Cien Beer

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director



It's Official. We can toast Arizona Farm Bureau's 100 years of existence with specially made wine and beer!

In the mix of our celebrations, we wanted to partner with organizations to help us truly celebrate the achievement of Arizona Farm Bureau reaching 100 years and to toast the next 100 years.

Centennial Red

Arizona Farm Bureau partnered with Yavapai Farm Bureau's Michael Pierce and the students at the Southwest Wine Center of Yavapai College, where Pierce also serves as director.

This 2019 vintage is a dry red blend with a burst of dried black cherry, medium tannins, and a delicious lingering finish. Pierce suggests one pair Centennial Red with "a beautifully marbled steak and maytag blue cheese."

Students at the Southwest Wine Center of Yavapai College have grown, produced, and bottled this red wine to commemorate 100 years of Arizona Farmer Bureau. The red blend is from Tempranillo, Refosco, Carignan, Sangiovese, Tannat and Cabernet Sauvignon.

Says Pierce, "Cheers to the history and future of Arizona agriculture!"

To purchase the Centennial Red, you'll find it at the beautiful Tasting Room of the Southwest Wine Center at Yavapai College.



Cien Beer

Arizona Farm Bureau partnered with Old Ellsworth Brewing Company for this special Centennial beer, called Cien.

Says Old Ellsworth Brewing Company owner Brian, "Cien has all Arizona grains in it. We have grain from Sonagwa malt in Camp Verde and Queen Creek from Grain R&D. I would describe the beer as a California common style. We call it an Arizona steam beef. It's a really old-style beer that's really easy to drink. Super malt forward, super flavorful and it has that nice coppery Arizona color."

You can purchase Cien beer at Old Ellsworth Brewing Company. You can also find the beer at select Wine & More stores around the valley.



"We live and work by the cycle of the seasons in a loop of prepare, plant, steward and harvest," said Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse. "We have good years and bad. While we are subject to both factors within and out of our control we know, Agriculture is essential to Arizona's prosperity and Arizona Farm Bureau is the Voice of Agriculture. We empower members through grassroots advocacy, communication, and education and will continue this work for the next 100 years."

Water Priorities Are Tricky!

What is important to some people can be irrelevant to others.

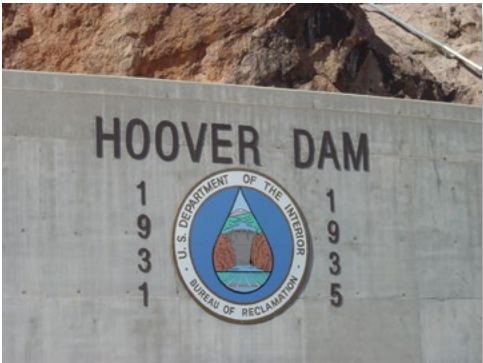
By Ed Gerak, Arizona Power Authority Executive Director and Arizona Farm Bureau Member

When it comes to the Boulder Canyon Project Act of 1928, the order of the words used in the bill established the Hoover Dam priorities that the Bureau of Reclamation would codify into law.

Hoover Dam is a civil engineering marvel that captures water in the Spring for use year-round on behalf of 25 million people in the Southwest. At full capacity it also provides enough electricity to power 1.3 million homes.

In the early years, supply exceeded demand, allowing California to overindulge on the excesses, creating an expectation of availability. Development in the Upper Basin (primarily Glen Canyon Dam) shrank the Lower Basin supply, but as long as Arizona couldn't take their full allocation, California could continue to indulge.

The cost of obtaining access to Arizona's full allocation was to agree to a junior appropriator status so California would not block approval of the Central Arizona Project. I don't think anyone believed that the Colorado River Basin would go through 20+plus years of drought, especially Arizona. But today Lake Mead sits at 36% capacity and Powell at 33%.



The Ancillary Effects of Reduced Water in Lake Mead and Lake Powell

While everyone in the West is keenly aware that the water supplies in Lake Mead and Powell are shrinking, most don't comprehend the ancillary effects this has on the region.

Some would likely argue that the persistent drought has caused entities to place water storage above irrigation, but power remains at the bottom of the priority list. In fact, due to the sense of urgency, power users weren't even in the room when the Drought Contingency Plan was negotiated. If they were, we could have argued that as the Ag pool goes away, there will be more of a dependence on groundwater. Extracting groundwater requires a lot of energy, and the greater the lift, the more power this requires.

The Arizona Power Authority (APA) has made supporting Arizona agriculture a priority since its inception. When the Drought Contingency Plan was first proposed, the APA began working on the impacts the drought would have on its customers.

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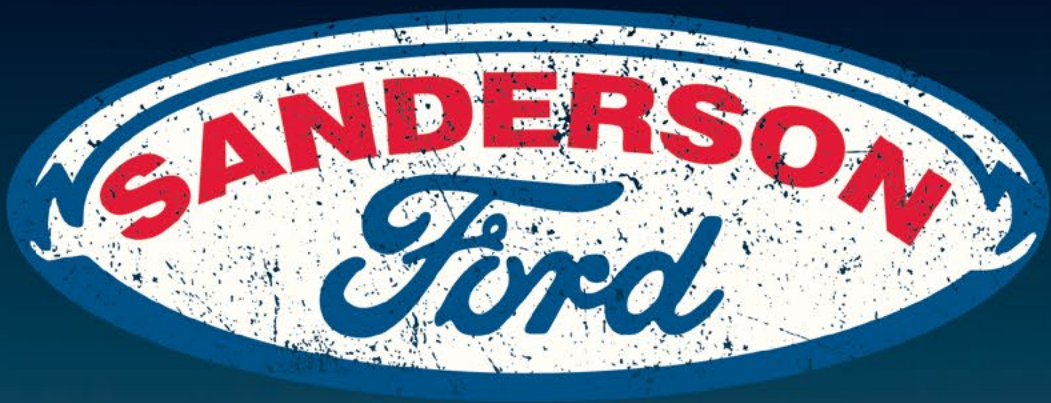
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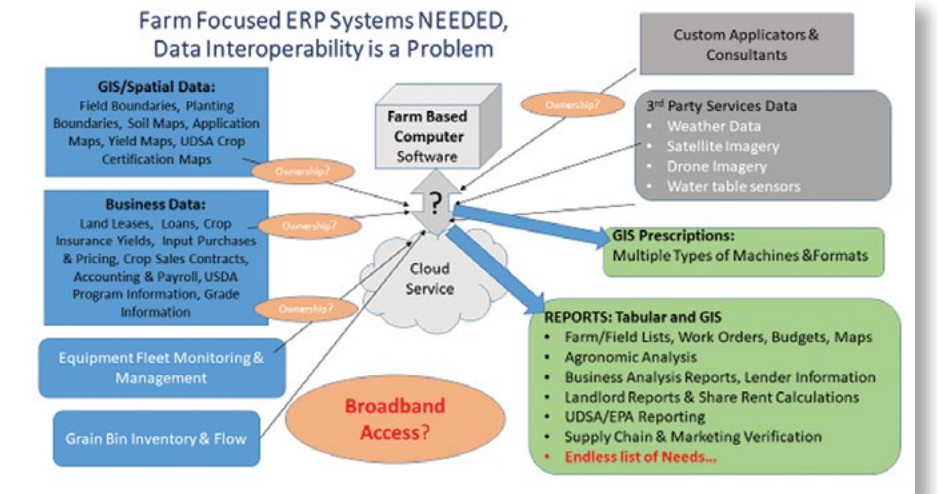
The commonalities are many. We all try to farm keeping an eye out for the best options for our operations and putting together the puzzle of economics, people and natural resources.

Arizona Agriculture: You’ve been keen to advance your farm’s record-keeping management and for agriculture in general. Talk about this?

Martin: I inherited a focus on farm recordkeeping from my father. It was a focus for him to know how the business was doing and also as a way to be careful and accurate in paying participating share rents.

We still have those same two areas of focus. Over my tenure computer/digital technology has made it easier in many ways, but more complex in others.

Arizona Agriculture: We all talk about technology advances in agriculture and how on-the-farm application continues to create advances. But what’s still the biggest challenge for us on the farm as it relates to data gathering and management? Maybe a better question, what’s holding us back?



Martin: The sources of data for farms to use to improve farm financial and operational records, as well as field operations and machine efficiency, are exploding, as is the complexity of organizing and managing it all. Agriculture suffers from a lack of data interoperability. Pieces of software are often special purpose. File formats are not standardized, often proprietary, and often incompatible across different pieces of software. Software that is marketed for helping farm offices with recordkeeping can be too narrowly focused and/or while designed to provide a service, also designed primarily to quietly gather information from the farmer rather than assisting the farmer with private business decisions.

Plus, the recognition and valuation of the carbon sequestration done by growing crops becoming an economic consideration for farmers in the next 10 years is a big win.

Arizona Agriculture: On regulation, what concerns you?

Martin: I believe there are good regulations, especially in areas of product safety, worker safety and environmental matters. However, I become concerned when the atmosphere around regulation is excessively aggressive or uninformed and misses the mark on what is workable or reasonable for achieving a stated goal.

Arizona Agriculture: Where are we a decade from now in American agriculture?

Martin: I certainly don’t know, but I see continuing trends towards consolidation of farming operations and corporate investment in farmland in some regions at the same time as an increase in “non-traditional” agriculture, things like vertical and urban farming. I believe the use of biologicals and robotics will grow quickly.

Arizona Agriculture: Global markets: Especially for cotton and other global crops, what opportunities are you hoping to see develop in the next few months?

Martin: I believe recent supply chain strains brought on by geopolitical struggles and Covid production and shipping disruptions are redirecting U.S. sourcing executives towards U.S. production. That should be a good for U.S. farmers.

Arizona Agriculture: What encourages you about the future of agriculture in America?

Martin: The general productivity of the land and the spirit of innovation among U.S. farmers and the U.S. business community.

Arizona Agriculture: You have a passion for agriculture. Why?

Martin: I enjoy growing things. 🚜

Water continued from page 2

As we move into Tier 1 shortage this year (with the real potential of reaching Tier 2 shortage by 2023), we are gaining clarity on how the decisions made in the past will impact us going forward. For Water Year 2022, the Arizona Power Authority is projecting a 9.7% loss of energy and a 15% loss of capacity over 2021 numbers. We are exploring ways to offset a potential rate increase of 9.5% next year. If the current drought continues, long-term projections are that energy loss will approach 37% by 2026.

Forecast at 10th, 50th and 90th Percentiles Stress Test Hydrology* (1988-2019 Record)										
Lake Mead Elevation										
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030		
10%	1,028	1,010	1,006	1,004	1,002	999	1,007	1,014		
50%	1,039	1,034	1,029	1,027	1,028	1,031	1,034	1,032		
90%	1,069	1,068	1,069	1,074	1,098	1,083	1,075	1,072		
Rate Forecast										
Past Rates	2020	2021	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
10%			\$ 37.70	\$ 41.96	\$ 45.29	\$ 47.56	\$ 48.40	\$ 48.32	\$ 44.99	\$ 46.07
50%	\$ 29.65	\$ 28.47	\$ 36.03	\$ 37.42	\$ 39.11	\$ 41.32	\$ 41.65	\$ 41.11	\$ 40.45	\$ 41.49
90%			\$ 32.69	\$ 33.99	\$ 33.67	\$ 33.55	\$ 32.13	\$ 33.23	\$ 33.12	\$ 34.52

Anticipated rate increases based on current drought conditions

It is a similar situation with the Colorado River Storage Project (Glen Canyon Dam and associated dams), with future energy estimates approaching a 35+% rate increase in future years.

The loss of energy couldn’t have come at a worse time. With increased restrictions on fracking due to environmental concerns and resource adequacy issues across the West, energy prices are nearly double what they were a year ago. Even though commodity prices have been increasing recently, input costs continue to climb.

Best case scenario is that we would have multiple years of above average snowpack to replenish the reservoirs. However, even if we got consistent years of the upper estimates of hydrology, it would take 14 years or more to fill Lake Mead to full pool, an elevation it hasn’t seen since 1983.

As a former irrigation district manager, I hated to see it rain because of lost water sales and potential system damage. Given the circumstances, praying for rain has moved way up on my priority list. 🚜

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Package Heads to the House

By Victoria Okula, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

After months of discussion, the Senate passed a bipartisan infrastructure package on August 10th by a vote of 69-30. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act spans more than 2,700 pages and includes \$550 billion in new spending over the next five years.

Modernizing America’s transportation has been a priority for the Farm Bureau for years, and this bill accomplishes much of what we have been advocating for. These investments are necessary and, in many cases, overdue. This infrastructure package will enhance the efficient and cost-effective transport of agricultural and food products resulting in substantial contributions and opportunities for U.S. economic growth and trade.

In particular, the bill guarantees funding for the following programs:

- \$65 billion for expanding rural broadband
- \$110 billion for roads, bridges, and major projects
- \$47.2 billion for resiliency funding to address critical infrastructure needs such as waste management, flood and wildfire mitigation, and drought
- \$55 billion for water infrastructure, which includes \$8.3 billion specifically for repairing aging infrastructure and investing in new infrastructure in the West.

Arizona Farm Bureau also applauds the inclusion exemption for livestock and insect haulers from Hours-of-Service regulations within a 150 air-mile radius from their final destination.

It was welcome news that this infrastructure package did not place the burden of these investments on America’s farmers and ranchers through increased tax rates or elimination of favorable tax codes, such as stepped-up basis. This infrastructure package now heads to the House where the timeline and prospects are less clear. We encourage Arizona’s Congressional delegation to pass a balanced, bipartisan infrastructure package that maintains the critical investments passed in the Senate version.

We thank Senators Sinema and Kelly who have spent months negotiating the deal and ensuring that Farm Bureau priorities were included in this historical infrastructure investment. 🚜



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Colorado River

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trict can't shoulder that expense on their own. So, since 2019, the districts have been working with a variety of partners to identify other sources, both state and federal, to help alleviate the cost of this essential project.

But at the end of the day, there is no readily identifiable way to mitigate the impending cutbacks. Pumping 300,000 acre-feet of groundwater just isn't realistic, and there are not enough higher-priority users who can diver their allotments to keep water flowing down the canal. Ultimately, the viability of Pinal County agriculture is going to depend on its ability to make some very significant changes in a very short amount of time.

Water Security at the Expense of Agriculture

The first thing that most of Arizona's thought leaders have been quick to point out over the last few weeks is that this shortage declaration does not mean that we are run-

ning out of water. Homeowners in Central Arizona won't see their taps running dry any time soon. Arizona is a water resilient state.

And while this talking point is accurate, it's also incomplete: Arizona is a water resilient state because agriculture is positioned to bear the pain of water scarcity. The margins in water planning across the state were made possible by agriculture. Farmers were responsible for shouldering the burden of developing Arizona's water supply. They allowed Arizona to take its full allocation of CAP water so that it wouldn't be commandeered by our neighboring state to the West.

Additionally, farmers spent decades and countless dollars investing in ways to make limited water go further to feed and clothe our state. And now, they are the first to lose access to the resource that they were instrumental in securing. And that leads us to an era in which the state must ask itself how much farming production it is willing to lose – and whether the state is prepared for the consequences. 🚜

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With over 75 combined years of experience, Matt Eyrich, Carrie Morales, Cody Stephan and Candilee Struble bring a wealth of knowledge to their new roles as Agribusiness Relationship Managers.

The entire team comes from farming families and has hands-on experience in the agriculture industry. The team understands the complexity of farming/ranching operations and the diverse financial needs of farmers across the Southwest. They are excited to be a part of NB|AZ® and look forward to expanding its presence in the agribusiness market.



MATT EYRICH
623.302.8714
Matthew.Eyrich@nbarizona.com



CARRIE MORALES
480.797.8406
Carrie.Morales@nbarizona.com



CODY STEPHAN
928.373.6941
Cody.Stephan@nbarizona.com



CANDILEE STRUBLE
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Regulatory Comments: Your Voice Matters

By Ana Kennedy Otto, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

You may have seen a recent Arizona Farm Bureau call-to-action asking you to submit comments to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding their plans to revise the Navigable Waters Protection Rule. Submitting comment letters to the EPA and other federal agencies is critically important as those entities draft, finalize, and ultimately implement rules by which those federal agencies operate.

When agencies first propose a rule or seek information through the rulemaking process, the comments provided by the public help inform the agencies on areas of the rule that may be impracticable or need revision. In the cases where agencies are seeking information, input from those who are impacted by the proposed actions is critical in helping agencies draft proposed rules. Arizona Farm Bureau staff frequently submit regulatory comments on behalf of Arizona Farm Bureau members. Recent submissions have covered topics such as pesticide registration reviews, wild horses, Clean Air Act regulations impacting Pinal and Yuma PM10 nonattainment areas, and USDA request for information regarding food system supply chains and climate smart agriculture and forestry strategy. The input we receive from members assists staff in developing robust comment letters specific to needs and impacts to Arizona’s farmers and ranchers.

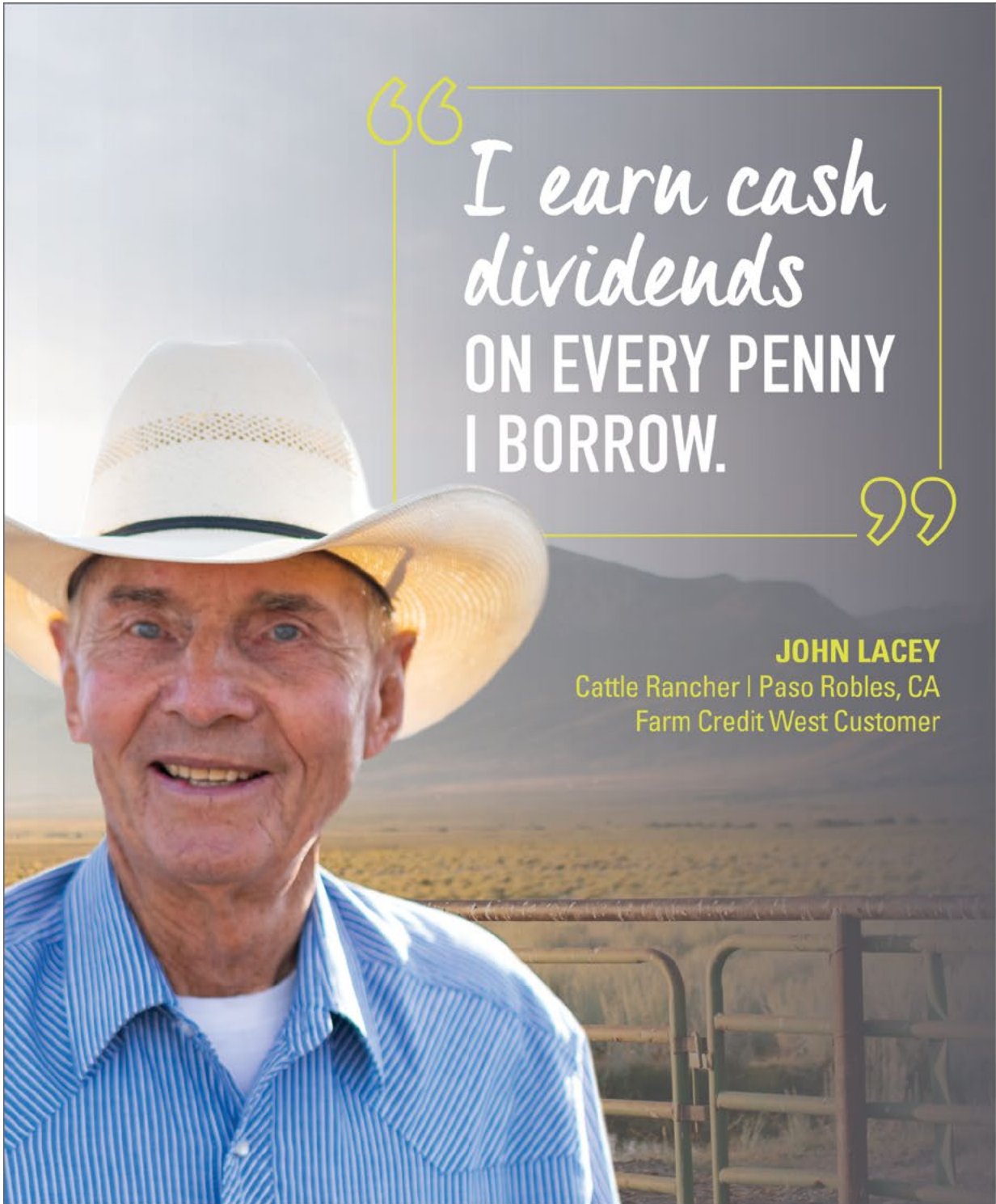
In all comment letters prepared by Arizona Farm Bureau, the objective is to highlight the impacts of a proposed rule and identify areas of concern – and it’s rewarding when we see our regulatory comments help make a difference.

Recently, the EPA released its Interim Decision on paraquat and fenamidone. In the comments submitted by Arizona Farm Bureau in response to EPA’s Proposed Interim Decisions on these two products, we noted concerns with increasing the reentry interval (REI) in some crops and recommended the agency maintain the single maximum rate of application of paraquat in alfalfa (seed production). In the case of fenamidone, EPA maintained the REI for its use in crops of concern, and in regard to paraquat, EPA maintained a single maximum rate. We have also seen Arizona Farm Bureau comments addressing pesticide Draft Risk Assessments referenced and considered in EPA Proposed Interim Decisions.

Although, the outcome of the regulatory rulemaking process may not always work out the way we want, it’s important that our voices are heard, and information is shared. Writing your own comment letter, taking part in a regulatory call-to-action, and sharing your expertise with Arizona Farm Bureau staff are various ways in which you can play a role in helping to inform the regulatory rule making process. The one caveat to remember is all comments submitted to the regulatory docket are public, therefore propriety information should not be shared! 🗣️



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Racin' for the Bacon for Ag Education is Seeing Double

By Katie Aikins, Arizona Farm Bureau Education Director

The Racin' for the Bacon Derby Dinner is back live and in-person! The event will be held Saturday, October 16th from 4:30-8:30pm on the South Lawn of the Arizona Farm Bureau building in Gilbert. Join us for the infamous pig races, delicious Arizona Farm Bureau Grill Dinner, live and silent auctions, and be sure to participate in our Derby Hat competition by wearing your fanciest hat. All proceeds benefit the Arizona Farm Bureau Educational Farming Company and ag education in Arizona!



We understand that this past year has made some of us anti-social. That is ok! Or maybe you really just can't make the dinner. Don't worry, you can still support the educational farming Company and ag education because we are also hosting the Racin' for the Bacon for Ag Education Virtual 5K. Those that register for the Virtual 5K will receive a Team Shirt that includes a fabulous ag pun and a one-of-a-kind pig race medal. Remember, you can run, walk, bike, hike, or just show off your race shirt and medal! Shirts and medals will be mailed out after October 16th.

Registration for the Two Events: One Cause Racin' for the Bacon Events can be found at <https://www.azfb.org/Article/Racin-for-the-Bacon-2-Events-1-Cause> Tickets for the Derby Dinner are \$50 and registration for the Virtual 5K are \$35. Want to participate in both? You get a deal at \$75

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The Government Relations Team: Advocating on Your Behalf

By Victoria Okula, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

The Arizona Farm Bureau works diligently to find opportunities to embed our policy into legislation and regulation. The Government Relations (GR) team oversees many functions of the Arizona Farm Bureau and provides our farm and ranch members with a variety of benefits.

We’ve compiled our major areas for you, so you can understand our efforts and take advantage of being a big part of what we do as an agriculture member.

- **Policy Development:** Farm Bureau is unique because it gives each farm and ranch member the chance to direct the organization’s work. And the way we do that is through our policy development process. Our members and staff take seriously the responsibility of reviewing longstanding policy to make sure it’s still relevant and creating new policy to guide our staff’s work at the local, state, and federal level.

- **Grassroots Advocacy:** We understand that you don’t have time to follow all state and federal legislation to determine what will impact your agricultural opera-

tions and what is important for you to act on. When a bill is reaching a critical time in Congress or the State Legislature, the GR team will alert you to act through the call-to-action system. To subscribe, text AZFB to 50457 and never miss the opportunity to contact your state or federal elected officials on important policy topics.

- **Weekly Updates:** Every week during the state legislative session, and every other week after the session adjourns, the GR team releases a publication with up-to-date information about pertinent issues that happened during that week. This includes a weekly video updated from the GR team! Go to our “Policy” page on azfb.org to sign up.

- **Resources:** The GR team tracks legislation, agency decisions, and timely topics to provide you with the most up-to-date resources on issues that matter to you. For example, during the pandemic the GR team released information on COVID-19 assistance for farmers and ranchers such as grant dollars for producers or travel bans that impacted H-2A processing.

- **Regulatory Comments:** Regulatory comments often provide input into how new laws should be implemented. Once legislation is signed into law, it is sent to the appropriate government agency to write supplemental rules so the law can be implemented. The GR Team submits comments on proposed agency rulemaking to ensure that agency regulations properly consider the perspectives of Arizona’s farmers and ranchers. We lean heavily on our farm and ranch members to understand the issue more when commenting and even consult agriculture experts.

- **Lobbying:** The GR Team actively communicates with elected officials at the state and federal legislation based on policy priorities set forth by members in the Arizona Farm Bureau Policy Book. Our most important advocates, or lobbyists, are our farmers and ranchers.

The GR team is just one spoke of the wheel but is a benefit that every member can take advantage of. It pays off to be a member! 🚜

Mentor/Protégé CAMP Profile: Nancy Caywood and Meredith Truelove

By Nancy Caywood and Meredith Truelove, CAMP Program Participants

First in a series, we profile mentor Nancy Caywood of Caywood Farms and protégé Meredith Truelove of Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). For the next 18 months, they and 9 other mentor/protégé partners will gather periodically to learn and experience more boots-on-the-ground agriculture and conservation practices in Arizona through the Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program (CAMP).

With the launch this last April of the Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program, in partnership with Arizona Farm Bureau, The NRCS team have been front and center in enthusiastically driving this unique partnership. While several other states have the CAMP program, Arizona’s is unique in the partnership effort with Arizona Farm Bureau.

At the beginning of this 18-month effort, Arizona Farm Bureau and NRCS want to shine a bright light on this exciting program and the experiences our mentors and protégé are experiencing.

From Caywood

Meredith Truelove and I met for our 1st CAMP Adventure on Wednesday, May 12th and our destination was Coolidge Dam/San Carlos Lake. There is something about a visual! The dam is capable of 1.2-million-acre feet of water and on May 12th, it had only 47.50-acre feet of water. Meredith had never been to Coolidge Dam and just looking at an empty lake with a very large dam structure was very impressive in a sad way. She gained an understanding of its history as well as how it impacts farmers in parts of Pinal County.

On June 9, Meredith also visited AG CAMP held at Casa Grande Middle School. We visited Oliver Anderson, longtime farmer near the town of Maricopa, and visit his flower drying shed. We also went to the Maricopa-Stanfield Irrigation District where we met with several employees who described their positions at the district. This was a great opportunity for Meredith to network and learn about irrigation, water and soil conservation in the Maricopa-Stanfield Irrigation District. She also gave a 30-minute presentation on soils to the students attending AG Camp.

Thanks for this opportunity. I feel this program is so valuable.

From Truelove

On our first meetup, Nancy and I attended a field day at the Coolidge Dam just south of San Carlos, AZ. We walked around the viewing areas but were restricted due to construction work. While at the Coolidge Dam, Nancy and I discussed the history behind the Dam and how it relates to the drought conditions in Arizona. Nancy also shared some of her family history about how her father worked on the construction of the Dam. We made sure to get plenty of pictures!

Our second meetup was at the Casa Grande Middle School for the Arizona Farm Bureau’s Ag Camp. I held a soil texturing demonstration for the kids at Ag Camp and talked to the students about soil texture and soil structure. After the demonstration, I talked to the students about the work that I do with the NRCS and how I can apply the soil texturing methods that I demonstrated to my conservation efforts. Lastly, Nancy and I also made sure to talk to the students about the educational requirements to be eligible for a job with the USDA.

What’s been the biggest takeaway so far? For me, the biggest takeaway so far is learning about the drought in Arizona. Nancy has shared with me some of the back-

ground on her family’s farm Caywood Farms, and how the drought continues to impact their ag production. There has been a lot of emotional and mental takeaways from listening to Nancy talk about the drought and the impact on all agricultural land in southern Arizona. Many questions have been raised especially when it comes to the agricultural future of the area.

Why have you felt this program has been helpful?
As a Casa Grande local, Nancy knows a lot about the

people and the environment in the Pinal County area. She has taught me a lot about the goals and challenges of the producers when it relates to the ongoing drought. Overall, this program has been helpful for me because as a Soil Conservationist, I need to know more about the needs, goals and challenges of the producers, farmers and ranchers in the area.

Editor’s note: This ongoing series will profile CAMP’s 10 Arizona mentor/protégés. 🚜



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